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THE GUITAR WIZARD, who brings his Ceramic Dog trio here tonight, sounds off on the international music scene and the meshing of cultures

Marc Ribot, world citizen

JUAN RODRIGUEZ SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE

When guitar genius Marc Ribot offers a definition of his new trio, Ceramic Dog (on his website), he supplies all the parameters:

"1. Chien de faïence: expression: frozen with emotion, as in the perfectly still moment before a fight breaks out.

"2. Ultimate kitsch object.

"3. A free/punk/funk/experimental/psychedelic/post electronica collective, featuring Marc (Cubanos Postizos, John Zorn, Tom Waits, etc. etc.), plus two of the best young players on the New York/California underground improv/experimental rock scene, Shazad Ismailly (bass) and Ches Smith (drums).

"4. Not a 'project': a real band."

All of which makes Ceramic Dog's local debut at Le Divan Orange tonight – and tomorrow's show at the Festival de musique émergente en Abitibi-Témiscamingue – something of an event, especially when Ribot's trenchant opinions on the international music scene, and la francophonie, are taken into account.

"The two interviews I've done with Montreal journalists were the first that asked about the name. Yes, it's based on 'chien de faïence,' which means frozen with emotion, like two dogs, or two lovers, in just that moment before they fight. I like it, because it's a more direct expression than many of my other projects. The Cubanos Postizos had values of punk translated into Cuban song, the Spiritual Unity band is related to rock but filtered through the music of ('60s free-jazz icon) Albert Ayler."

The position of the American musical hegemony is "changing somewhat, as jazz and rock are more loosely defined in Europe," said Ribot, who's played on French poet-singer Alain Bashung's classic albums Chatterton and L'Imprudence.

The reasons for American cultural dominance are complex, he said. "At the end of the (Second World) War, the U.S. film industry was the only one left standing and was able to establish a strong presence in most places on the globe, with some exceptions of strong local cinemas – India, for example – where people really don't know who Marilyn Monroe was.

"Certainly in Europe, the U.S. iconography was widely accepted. For example, I was touring a small Alpine village and saw a poster for a local band: 'Ce soir: The Cottonpickers.' I mean, there's no cotton atop the Alps or within 3,000 miles. Yet a bunch of local teenagers chose to express their sense of rebellion, and whatever it is teenagers feel against the status quo, (with) imagery taken from the American black south. ... They adopted images based on U.S. situations, and this affected music.

"I toured with Larry Knechtel, who played with Duane Eddy, one of the first rockers to go to England, and Larry said people's jaws dropped and they said (adopting a British accent), 'It's so primitive, so raw!' This is (white) Duane Eddy, for God's sake, but the blackness of it knocked them out.

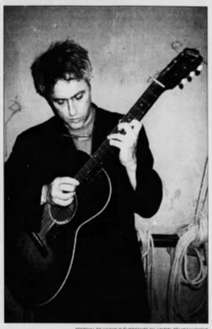
"Because of the film mythologies and because a lot of important musicians were from the U.S., a lot of great European players didn't get their due because of European audiences' preferences for Americans.

"The film phenomenon is fading as time goes by, as other national cinemas recovered and got strong, and because of the political ill will the U.S. has managed to generate. I've never supported politically motivated boycotts of American music or culture, because I think that that kind of dialogue is positive. But in some ways, the de-emphasis on American music is healthy and inevitable." The political realities that produced the dominance of American pop culture are fading, he added, "and good riddance."

"To bring things back to a francophone perspective, I'm a Serge Gainsbourg fan – lyrically he's brilliant and his music is interesting – yet most of his musical influences are from the U.S. or Latin America. He's not playing French art song, he doesn't sound like Édith Piaf. So I always felt there was a blind spot in French rock that's only now being addressed.

"It was problematic because, in my cultural perspective, U.S. rock 'n' roll is a dialogue between power and powerlessness – black Americans and their white colonizers – which privileges powerlessness and the black voice. British rock took some of these same American blues cues, slavishly adopted by groups like the Yardbirds, but it only really got going when it developed a dialogue with its own colonized people – i.e. Jamaica. Punk only came about after Britain had started a dialogue with its own colonial past and present.

"The problem with French rock, until relatively recently, was that it looked towards American and Brit rock but avoided a discourse with its own colonial past and present. To me, if you want to look at the real possibilities for a great French rock, it's in the dialogue with rai music, with people like Rachid Taha. I don't know if Rachid knows how important he potentially is. I think it's experiments like that which, to me, make the contemporary French scene – expressed in electronica and the world-beat stuff that draws on North African modes – so interesting. There's a lot of experimentation going on, and that has the biggest potential."



FESTIVAL DE MUSIQUE ÉMERGENTE EN ABITIBI-TÉMISCAMINGUE
"(Europeans) adopted images based on U.S. situations, and this affected music," Marc Ribot says.

"U.S. rock 'n' roll is a dialogue between power and powerlessness."
MARC RIBOT

Marc Ribot performs with Ceramic Dog tonight at 10 at Le Divan Orange, 4234 St. Laurent Blvd. The show is sold out.

FINBARR O'REILLY REUTERS
At an emergency feeding station in Niger, Finbarr O'Reilly photographed a malnourished child touching his mother's mouth.

Telling moment captures prize

Canadian gets World Press Photo of 2005

KATHRYN GREENAWAY
THE GAZETTE

Thirteen months ago, Canadian photojournalist Finbarr O'Reilly entered an emergency feeding centre run by Médecins sans Frontières in Tahoua, Niger. He sat quietly, observing.

A severely malnourished boy reached up to touch his mother's nose, his tiny hand sliding down to rest briefly on her mouth.

O'Reilly shot a few frames.

Seven months ago, O'Reilly's photo of the child's hand resting on his mother's mouth was selected from 83,044 photographs as the World Press Photo of the Year 2005.

O'Reilly is in Montreal for the opening of the World Press Photo exhibit at the Musée Juste pour rire, tonight at 7 p.m.

"I try to show people with their dignity intact," O'Reilly said as he looked at his winning photograph yesterday. "You have to be sensitive to the situation."

O'Reilly rarely goes into a situation shooting. He'll often spend days in one location until people are comfortable with his presence. "It's humbling going to these places," O'Reilly said. "To witness their resourcefulness when they have so little. I've been offered food in refugee camps."

O'Reilly grew up in Vancouver and was an arts reporter for the Globe and Mail and the National Post before heading to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2001 to work as a reporter for Reuters. (He had backpacked through parts of Africa after graduating from university and was determined to return.)

O'Reilly began taking pictures only after he ended up in Congo without a photographer to illustrate his stories.

When his images began to get more attention than his stories, he began to shoot on a freelance basis. The WPP award happened less than two years later, but winning hasn't given him a swelled head. "I have one good picture," O'Reilly said. "Look at some of these incredible photo essays. I consider myself a beginner."

O'Reilly is currently Reuters chief photographer for West and Central Africa and is based in Dakar, Senegal. Life is chaotic.

The 35-year-old was covering the elections in Congo this summer when he was pulled off the job to go cover the war in Lebanon. He considers this stop in Montreal a vacation.

"This is the best job in the world," he said. "I want to keep telling stories I think are under-reported by the Western media."

The exhibit is organized by Montreal-based Reporters Communication and installed by WPP's Jeroen Visser. O'Reilly gives a talk tomorrow at 7 p.m. Also on display is work by local photographers Jacques Nadeau (Le Devoir) and Christinne Muschi (Reuters, Quebec) as well as O'Reilly's African photos.

For more than 49 years, the Netherlands-based WPP has been handing out awards for excellence in photojournalism. This year, 4,448 photographers from 122 countries submitted photographs for consideration.

The exhibit hall and bar remain open until midnight tonight. The midnight closing repeats every Thursday.

The World Press Photo exhibit is at the Musée Juste pour rire, 2111 St. Laurent Blvd., 5th floor, until Sept. 24. Tickets cost $5. See www.reporters.qc.ca.

kgreenaway@thegazette.canwest.com

New-music maestros converge on Rouyn-Noranda

This Labour Day weekend, Rouyn-Noranda hosts la crème de la crème of the local and international new-music scenes at the Festival de musique émergente en Abitibi-Témiscamingue.

Now in its fourth year, FMEAT has quickly become a valuable niche fest – like the same town's acclaimed film festival – where rising musicians in various genres perform, play and party in a relaxed community atmosphere. It's here that Marc Ribot offers his Ceramic Dog band, and where Jon Spencer's new rockabilly project Heavy Trash plays two nights.

Beyond these alt heavy-hitters, there's an amazing lineup of Québécois acts: Dobacaracol (opening the fest tonight), Call Me Poupée, Dany Placard, Patrick Watson, Sunny Duval, Galaxie 500, Carl-Éric Hudon, Thomas Hellman, WD-40, Xavier Caféïne, the Sainte Catherines, Fredric Gary Comeau, Atach Tatuq, Plaster, Elektrik Bones, Yves Lambert and the Bébert Orchestra, Artist of the Year and many more.

The festival continues until Sunday. Package trips are available, including airfare and accommodation.

For more information on the festival, consult the website www.fmeat.org.

JUAN RODRIGUEZ

CONCERT REVIEW

Rancid's powerful punk far from best-before date

Blazing energy – and a folk jamboree – at first of three Spectrum shows

T'CHA DUNLEVY
GAZETTE MUSIC CRITIC

The Spectrum was punk rock central Tuesday as veteran Bay Area act Rancid settled in for the first of three nights. The place was packed, adrenaline was running high, and mohawks and Rancid T-shirts were the fashion statements of choice.

The band hasn't had a new album since 2003's Indestructible, but that didn't seem to bother anyone. Ringmaster Lars Frederiksen and Tim Armstrong traded vocal duties and guitar lines, backed by bassist Matt Freeman and drummer Brett Reed. They ran through hits from every era of their 15-year career.

The overwhelming consensus: These guys rock. They write anthems that the squeegee set, and not just the pop-punk mall rats, can relate to. Rooted in the rebel rock of the Clash, their versatile sound mixes attitude and hooks, without sacrificing integrity.

They came out blazing. Frederiksen, Reed and Freeman got things rolling. Armstrong emerged with a shuffle in his step, his black leather jacket and brimmed hat exuding timeless style.

"How the f— are you guys doing?" Frederiksen bellowed after a couple of songs. "I want to see everyone out there with their dancing shoes on. This one is dedicated to our old friends the Ripcordz. It's called Time Bomb."

Montreal's Ripcordz had opened up the night, followed by boisterous Boston ska-punks Big D and the Kids Table. Another Montreal act, the Planet Smashers, takes the early slot tonight.

"Here's a song from one of our favourite bands, Operation Ivy," Frederiksen announced a little later. It was the 1990 anti-war anthem Unity, by Armstrong and Freeman's old group.

Freeman took the spotlight soon after, laying down a frenetic solo during It's Quite Alright, prompting Frederiksen to anoint him "the greatest bass player in the world."

"That was a good one," said Armstrong.

"We're having a good time," Frederiksen concurred. "I'm not blowing smoke up your asses, but Montreal is one of Rancid's favourite cities. That's why we're playing three nights."

The set built to a feverish climax, with the crowd getting giddier by the minute. Rowdy renditions of Rats in the Hallway and Ruby Soho (complete with shout-it-out singalongs) left fans hungry for more at the encore.

Rancid returned for a four-guitar acoustic set (even Reed picked up a six-string), beginning with Fall Back Down. Suddenly we were in the midst of a folk jamboree. The crowd lapped it up. Two songs later, when the band played Billy Bragg's To Have and Have Not – which Frederiksen covered on the 2001 album Lars Frederiksen and the Bastards – the chorus got the boisterous reception it deserved.

"Just because you're better than me," Frederiksen sang, to which the audience replied, "doesn't mean I'm la-azy."

And, "Just because you're going forwards" – "doesn't mean I'm going backwards."

For anyone who thought things were getting mushy, they wrapped things up with a few swift thrashers, finishing with 1994's Radio, and another irresistible chorus:

"When I got the music / I got a place to go."

Rancid performs again tonight at 8 at the Spectrum. The show is sold out.

tdunlevy@thegazette.canwest.com

fasttrack

Nikki sings benefit

Nikki Yanofsky, the 12-year-old Montreal singing phenom who wowed the crowds at the Montreal International Jazz Festival in June, will be doing a benefit concert Sept. 19 at 8 p.m. at Club Soda. Proceeds will go to cancer research. Since starting to perform a year ago, Nikki, as she is known, has bowled over audiences with her renderings of tunes by Ella Fitzgerald, Aretha Franklin and Billie Holiday. She is slated to cut her first disc soon. Tickets, $49.50 to $75, go on sale today at Club Soda, 1225 St. Laurent Blvd. Call 514-286-1010 or Ticketpro at 514-908-9090.

Concert update

Current Swell performs at the Green Room on Sept. 22. Tickets cost $8 and go on sale today at Admission. **Sloan** performs Oct. 5 at Le National as part of Pop Montreal. Tickets cost $20 and go on sale today at Admission. **30 Seconds to Mars** performs Oct. 12 at Le National. Tickets, $18, go on sale tomorrow at Admission. **Sparta** performs Oct. 13 at Les Saints. Tickets cost $18.50 and go on sale today at Admission. **Hatebreed** performs Oct. 28 at the Spectrum. Tickets cost $18, on sale now at Ticketpro. **Mute Math** performs Nov. 7 at the Main hall. Tickets, $13.50, go on sale today at Admission. **Tahiti 80** performs Nov. 19 at the Main Hall. Tickets cost $15 and go on sale tomorrow at Admission. For Admission: call 514-790-1245 or see www.admission.com. For Ticketpro: call 514-908-9090 or see www.ticketpro.ca.

CanWest CanSpell 2006
Word of the Day
squdge
SKWAHJ
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